REMARKS

Claims 1 – 4 are pending in the present application. Claims 1 and 2 have been amended. Claims 5 – 12 were previously withdrawn.

Claims 1 – 4 were rejected under 35 USC §102(e) as being anticipated by US Patent No. 6666771 (*Boutin*).

Claim 1 relates to a propeller shaft assembly comprising at least one shock absorbing section. The shock absorbing section that couples an outer shaft and an inner shaft that are mutually spline engaged to be retractable with impact loads. More specifically, claim 1 has been amended to recite that the outer shaft has a splined portion and that the inner shaft has a splined portion:

> . . . said shock absorbing section comprising an outer shaft and an inner shaft, said outer shaft having splined portion with a plurality of axially extending spline teeth in an inner peripheral surface of the outer shaft and said inner shaft having a splined portion with a plurality of axially extending spline teeth in an outer peripheral surface of the inner shaft, said splined portion of the outer shaft and said splined portion of the inner shaft ~~that~~ are mutually spline-engaged such that the inner shaft and the outer shaft are retractable with impact loads . . ."

Claim 1 has also been amended to recite the limitation of original claim 2 of a stop ring fitted to an end face of the inner shaft that is engaged to a stepped portion. Claim 1 further recites that the supporting member is an annular collar and that:

> the_supporting member is press-fit into an inner diameter portion of the outer shaft, and an end face of the inner shaft is disposed in contact with the supporting member in a direction of retraction with respect to the outer shaft, wherein the supporting member structure is arranged and constructed to facilitate adjustment of the press fit strength and related displaceability of the supporting member.

Boutin does not teach or suggest a propeller shaft assembly with all the limitations out claim 1. For example, *Boutin* teaches propeller shaft assembly with a ball that rolls in two ball tracks. There is no teaching or suggestion of propeller shaft assembly with splined portions of the inner and/or outer shaft, spline teeth or spline engagement.

Further, *Boutin* teaches a grease cap in the propeller shaft assembly that is pressed-fit. However, there is no teaching or suggestion in *Boutin* of an annular collar supporting member that is press-fit into an inner diameter portion of the outer shaft of the propeller shaft assembly. In fact, *Boutin* teaches away from an annular collar supporting member as the grease cap in Boutin serves to "seal and prevent grease from escaping." See, Boutin at Col. 4, lines 15 – 16.

There is no teaching or suggestion in *Boutin* that the inner shaft is disposed in contact with the supporting member in a direction of retraction with respect to the outer shaft. Further, there is no teaching or suggestion in *Boutin* of a propeller shaft assembly

with a supporting member structure arranged and constructed to facilitate adjustment of the press fit strength and related displaceability of the supporting member.

Because *Boutin* does not teach or suggest a propeller shaft assembly with all the limitations of claim 1, claim 1 is patentable. Claims 2 – 4 that depend from claim 1 are also patentable.

CONCLUSION

Having obviated the Examiner's objections, applicant hereby seeks an early indication of allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as First Class mail in an envelope addressed to: Commissioner of Patents PO Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313, on August 31, 2005.

Elizabeth McAleese